

VOLUME 138 NO. 3 MAY/JUNE 2008

# FURNITURE WORLD



**IN  
THIS  
ISSUE**

- SIXTEEN IMPORTANT BEDDING SALES TIPS
- RECYCLE YOUR FOAM PACKING MATERIALS
- FORGET OLD MEDIA - USE PEOPLE MEDIA - PART 2
- REVENUE OPPORTUNITIES WITH FREE WEBSITE ANALYTICS
- HELP YOUR BEDDING CUSTOMERS COOL IT!
- DEALING WITH "I'LL KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT"



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# A Powerful Solution in a Challenging Environment!

Let's face it... It's tough out there!...how you not only compete, but rather Excel in a difficult retail climate is one of the most challenging issues facing our retail partners today. The team at Kathy Ireland Home by Omnia Furniture understands the obstacles you face and is ready to offer you distinct advantages that may mean the difference between trying to maintain last years' figures and growing your market share in the current economic environment we face.

As a Brand Partner to Kathy Ireland Home, our mission of "...finding solutions for families, especially busy moms"™ ... is centered around offering a product line focused on the 4 corners of our business model: Fashion...Quality...Value...Safety.™

The challenges facing consumers today when shopping for home furnishings are tremendous, between hectic family schedules, choosing coordinating décor and trying to stretch their dollars as much as possible, it is no wonder that retailers have to be at their best to gain the confidence of their customers. That is one of the most powerful advantages that our retail partners enjoy at Kathy Ireland Home by Omnia Furniture. Product branding has changed the way consumers shop for and purchase items by creating a comfortable and convenient solution to the need or desire they have. Kathy's customer understands the benefits she receives when she partners with products that Kathy offers through her Brand Partners and the retailers they service. Whether it is choosing from a multitude of styles and designs, experiencing the wonderful value that is offered by the quality of our product lines or knowing that family safety is always a central focus of our products, Kathy's customer has voted to join the brand family through purchasing her products.

With thousands of products offered through retail showrooms around the world, Kathy Ireland Home has become one of the most successful brands in the home furnishings and fashion business. Our retail partners are experiencing a growth in sales and profits as a result of offering Kathy Ireland Home brand products as a part of their merchandising plan. With over 120 frames and 150 different colors and styles of leather and fabrics to choose from, Kathy Ireland Home by Omnia Furniture offers you one of the largest and most flexible product lines available. Our quality standards are second to none and the marketing support through point of purchase, hang tags, product information and training produces results for our retail partners.

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# IN THIS ISSUE

The Business Solutions Magazine For Furniture Retailers

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**Cover Photo:** Featured is Manchester & Britania from [Kathy Ireland Home by Omnia Furniture](#). These classic pieces were designed with the most sophisticated furniture purchaser in mind. Attention to detail, deep seating, nail heads and tufting will allow your customers to turn their living rooms into libraries. See page 1 in this issue or visit [www.omnialeather.com](http://www.omnialeather.com) for more information.

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FURNITURE WORLD editors' picks of best selling furniture and accessory designs.

FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE • BPA Association of Business Publishers  
1333A North Ave. #437, New Rochelle, NY 10804  
Tel: 914-235-3095 • Fax: 914-235-3278 • [www.furninfo.com](http://www.furninfo.com)

**Publisher** • Barton Bienenstock • [barton@furninfo.com](mailto:barton@furninfo.com)  
**Editor** • Russell Bienenstock • [russ@furninfo.com](mailto:russ@furninfo.com)  
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**Marketing Feature Editor** • Lamy Mullins • [editor@furninfo.com](mailto:editor@furninfo.com)

FURNITURE WORLD: (ISSN0738-890X) - Published every other month by Towse Publishing Co., 1333-A North Avenue, #437 New Rochelle, NY 10804. Subscription: \$19 per year; \$39.00 for 3 years, \$26 Canada, \$4/copy; Foreign \$85; (U.S. currency only). Periodical postage paid at New Rochelle, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to FURNITURE WORLD, 1333A North Avenue, #437, New Rochelle, NY 10804. Copyright 2007 Towse Publishing Company, all rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.



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# Foam Packaging Materials RECYCLING

Styrofoam (EPS) is 2-5% petroleum based styrene and 95-98% air. Recycling this bulky product now makes sense for home furnishings retailers.

*Warehouse Management by Dan Bolger*

The April 2006 issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine provided a comprehensive overview of recycling and trash disposal. This article, posted to the Operations Article Archives on [www.furninfo.com](http://www.furninfo.com) included information on recycling Styrofoam (EPS) used to provide damage protection for merchandise from offshore and domestic manufacturing locations.

While EPS is great for this function, its disposal characteristics are of increasing concern to furniture retailers for cost and environmental reasons. Styrofoam or EPS is a composite of 2-5% petroleum based polystyrene and 95-98% air. This material doesn't compress in compactors

and a thousand pounds of it can fill a 53 ft. trailer, making disposal very expensive.

Recycling EPS now makes sense for furniture retailers. There are a number of processing alternatives that can change its disposal from a big expense to one that can actually generate a payback. This article will provide highlights of several successful approaches. One will surely be viable for your company.

## CASE STUDY LINDER'S FURNITURE

Linder's Furniture, the 2007 Western Home Furnishings Association Retailer of

the Year, operates ten locations in Southern California. Operations Director Mark Kantor provided insight into a comprehensive program at Linder's that resulted in the recycling of approximately 95% of all traditional waste products including office paper, corrugated, plastic film and EPS. Only garbage goes in the trash now.

Their on-site installation of Runi equipment provided by Olympic Wire & Equipment resulted in a payback in less than one year. It also resulted in favorable publicity in the local papers and positive employee attitudes regarding their roles in making the environment better.





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*Runi equipment handles EPS by processing it into dense foam blocks. The end result looks like logs that are easily stacked and palletized. The material from Linder's is shipped to Timbron Corporation in Walnut Creek California.*

## Foam Packaging Materials RECYCLING

Runi equipment handles EPS by processing it into dense foam blocks. The end result looks like logs that are easily stacked and palletized. The material from Linder's is shipped to Timbron Corporation in Walnut Creek California to make interior trim moldings for Home Depot and other customers.

About twenty other locations have been set up with Runi equipment by

Olympic Wire & Equipment in the West Coast region and there are numerous others throughout the USA and International locations.

### OTHER EPS RECYCLING OPTIONS

If you are a smaller retailer for whom this capital expenditure on equipment doesn't make sense, there may be other

options. Check to see if there are community-wide recycling solutions for smaller generators in your area. The City of Roseville CA, for example, has been operating a community wide program for EPS since fall 2007. Materials can be dropped off at several recycling centers. The city provides containers for pick up from local furniture retailers generating larger amounts of EPS. Arrangements have been made for businesses to drop

XT-200



XT-700



XT-400



XT-500



*RT has designed an EPS densifying mechanism using high volume extruder technology: EPS scrap is densified into hard ingots going through crusher, heat bands, and extruder. The XT-200 is suitable for smaller to medium sized retailers. The XT-700 unit can process volumes for community recycling or large warehouse operations. The XT-500 is the most popular, used by City Furniture and Eldorado Furniture.*







## RECYCLING EPS NOW MAKES SENSE FOR FURNITURE RETAILERS.

*There are a number of processing alternatives that can change its disposal from a big expense to one that can actually generate a payback.*

off EPS peanuts at package stores for reuse, and bubble wrap is recycled for use by local libraries to package inter library loans. Sam Bigley of the city's Environmental Utilities department says that the response has been very positive and they are looking to expand their capacity.

Another approach to EPS recycling is to shred and extrude the foam material. This process removes air and produces ingots that can be molded into lamp bases, baseboards and similar items anywhere in the world. The ingots are fork lift handled in either large bags or boxes. City Furniture, Eldorado Furniture and many others are using RecycleTech equipment that uses this technology.

There are also numerous companies that can use packing foam for alternative uses. For instance, Rastra Inc. re-processes the foam for insulated concrete forms. This option may only be cost effective for you if you are within a rea-

sonable distance from the secondary user of the material. After reviewing the cost of disposal versus transporting to a New Jersey foam recycler, Suburban Furniture's Mark Friedman chose hauling to the recycling facility. They accumulate

the foam in large plastic bags or mattress bags and deliver them in their own truck.

In conversations with retailers and delivery companies at the 2008 International Furniture Transportation &

**AFTER REVIEWING  
THE COST OF  
DISPOSAL VERSUS  
TRANSPORTING**  
*to a New Jersey foam  
recycler, Suburban  
Furniture's Mark Friedman  
chose hauling to the  
recycling facility.*

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## ANOTHER APPROACH TO EPS RECYCLING

*is to shred and extrude the foam material. This process removes air and produces ingots that can be molded into lamp bases, baseboards, etc.*

Logistics Conference, everyone concurred that proper separation of the various materials for recycling is essential. Foam glued to corrugated can't be recycled. Retailers should ask their manufacturing suppliers, to work towards incorporating packaging details that maximize recycling opportunities.

Whether one system is better than another is beyond the scope of this article but users of each system were pleased with their respective results. Any solution is obviously better than land filling EPS. Both Runi and RecycleTech offer

equipment with capacities for small, medium and large generators of foam. The current value is in the range of 8 to 30 cents per pound depending on geographic location and market conditions.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers:  
<http://www.epspackaging.org/>

Olympic Wire & Equipment Company :  
[www.olympicequipment.com](http://www.olympicequipment.com)

Recycle Tech Corp:  
<http://recycletechno.com>

City of Roseville CA:  
[www.roseville.ca.us/eu](http://www.roseville.ca.us/eu)

Daniel Bolger P.E. provides operations consulting services to clients throughout North America. You can contact Dan at [bolger@furninfo.com](mailto:bolger@furninfo.com) or call 740-503-8875. For more information on this or other transportation, logistics and furniture warehousing topics, go to [www.furninfo.com](http://www.furninfo.com) to read all of Dan's articles.

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WELCOME TO THE NEW WORLD.



# Create Revenue Opportunities With WEBSITE ANALYTICS

Free website analytics can help you unlock the potential of your website, your advertising and your business.

*Internet Marketing By Leslie Carothers*

Just about every home furnishings retailer has a website these days. Some are well done, customer focused and brand appropriate.

Many aren't, but we will leave that discussion for another day.

Even fewer retailers take the time and effort to track their website analytics. So

why should you do this? Well, first, it's free. No strings attached. Google has empowered anyone who wants to uncover and/or create revenue opportunities by installing Google Analytics on his or her website.

Only a company with Google's market power and incredibly smart employees would make such a useful tool available for free, but they have, and everyone of you with a website should want to use it - especially in our current economic environment.

Working efficiently to maximize ROI is imperative in times like these and Google Analytics makes this much easier and less time consuming. It delivers many of the metrics you need to accurately measure the effectiveness of almost every aspect of your online and offline advertising dollars.

With careful review and interpretation, you will be able to immediately make changes to your website and to other real world operational areas to bring you into closer alignment with your customers' desires - NOW and in real time.

## INSTALLING GOOGLE ANALYTICS

How do you install Google Analytics on your website, and what, exactly, will it allow you to do?







*You can measure if your offline ads are working by noting how many more page views you had from a particular geographical area by date or time based on when you placed a certain ad.*

First, to install it, type the following link into your browser's window and follow the directions found on this blog: <http://www.themeplayground.com/how-to-install-google-analytics-on-your-wordpress-blog>.

Now, what are the top ten ways retailers can use analytics to uncover or create revenue opportunities?

**1** The executive dashboard function allows you to see all of the most critically important metrics from your website at one glance. If there is a problem area, you can immediately take action to correct it.

**2** You can target your advertising dollars much more effectively because this useful tool allows you to see deep geographic data. For instance:

- You can see exactly what zip codes your website's visitors are in.
- You can determine exactly what areas of your trading area are garnering more page views.
- You can measure if your offline ads are working by noting how many more page views you had from a particular geographical area by date or time based on when you placed a certain ad.

**3** You can see how your website is performing with different date ranges-at a glance. This allows you to immediately see the results of a direct mail campaign or an ad that was placed in a more traditional media format.

**4** If you advertise with AdWords or Ad Sense, Google Analytics will provide you with specific metrics for each campaign, group or keyword you use. You can see the number of clicks, the cost, and conversion and if it resulted in an ecommerce transaction (if you have ecommerce) or some other goal that you've pre-defined. Then, it will calculate your margin-revenue spent vs. the cost of acquiring the customer.

**5** Site overlay allows you to see how many times each link on your site has been clicked and whether that ultimately led to conversion if you are running ecommerce. If not, you can take a look at your most clicked on links and brainstorm what is it about those links that is appealing to your visitors. Then you can replicate that information in other media. In addition, you can rework those links that are not attracting visitors to make them more relevant. You can do this as often as you wish.

**6** Analytics also allows you to set up specific reports and specify when

and to whom they will automatically be sent. This makes for clear communication and huge productivity savings.

**7** You will be able to see which keywords visitors are using to come to your site and their ranking. This allows you to set up targeted advertising campaigns with those keywords, send out offers to them and add relevant content to your website to bring them back for more. For instance, if the number one keyword that people are using on your site is "couch" vs. "sofa", you can buy the ad word "couch" in order to generate more traffic. It can also alert you to bizarre keywords and unusual trends that you would never find out about otherwise. If you find out, for example, that for three months running, the top three keywords on your site are: "outdoor furniture", "kitchen tables" and "area rugs", you can add appropriate content to your site and also alert your buyers to the fact that consumers are looking for these product categories on your website and probably in your store as well.

**8** You will be able to identify websites that people are coming from to visit your site and also view the number of visitors coming from each of these sites. You may want to consider sponsored search ads on sites that send you the most traffic. In addition, if you do ecom-



# Google Analytics

merce, you will be able to see how many people convert off of each referring site and so understand the relative quality of the traffic you receive.

**9** You can track how many of your visitors come back to your site again and again so you know if your content and offers are relevant. If not, you can make changes to bring up your numbers.

**10** Last, but not least, Google Analytics tells you what the top content is for each page on your site. You can see how many times it has been viewed and how long the average customer "sticks" to that piece of content. By looking at this daily or weekly, you can determine what content your customers find valuable. This will allow you to offer more valuable content, offers or coupons on specific pages, or stage a special store event that relates to that content.

There are many more metrics that Google Analytics offers you, as well. As you explore and become familiar with this tool, you and your team will find even more creative ways to uncover and

create revenue based on your particular needs.

Before setting up your reports, you may also want to take a look at this excellent article, "Make Web Analytics Actionable: Focus On 'What's Changed'" at [www.kaushik.net/avinash](http://www.kaushik.net/avinash). This article points out that that sifting through piles of web data can be difficult and tedious and mentions additional tools that savvy marketers can use to focus attention on changes in the web use data stream over time. These tools can help you to more quickly see which keywords are rising or falling and help you to find hidden trends in website data.

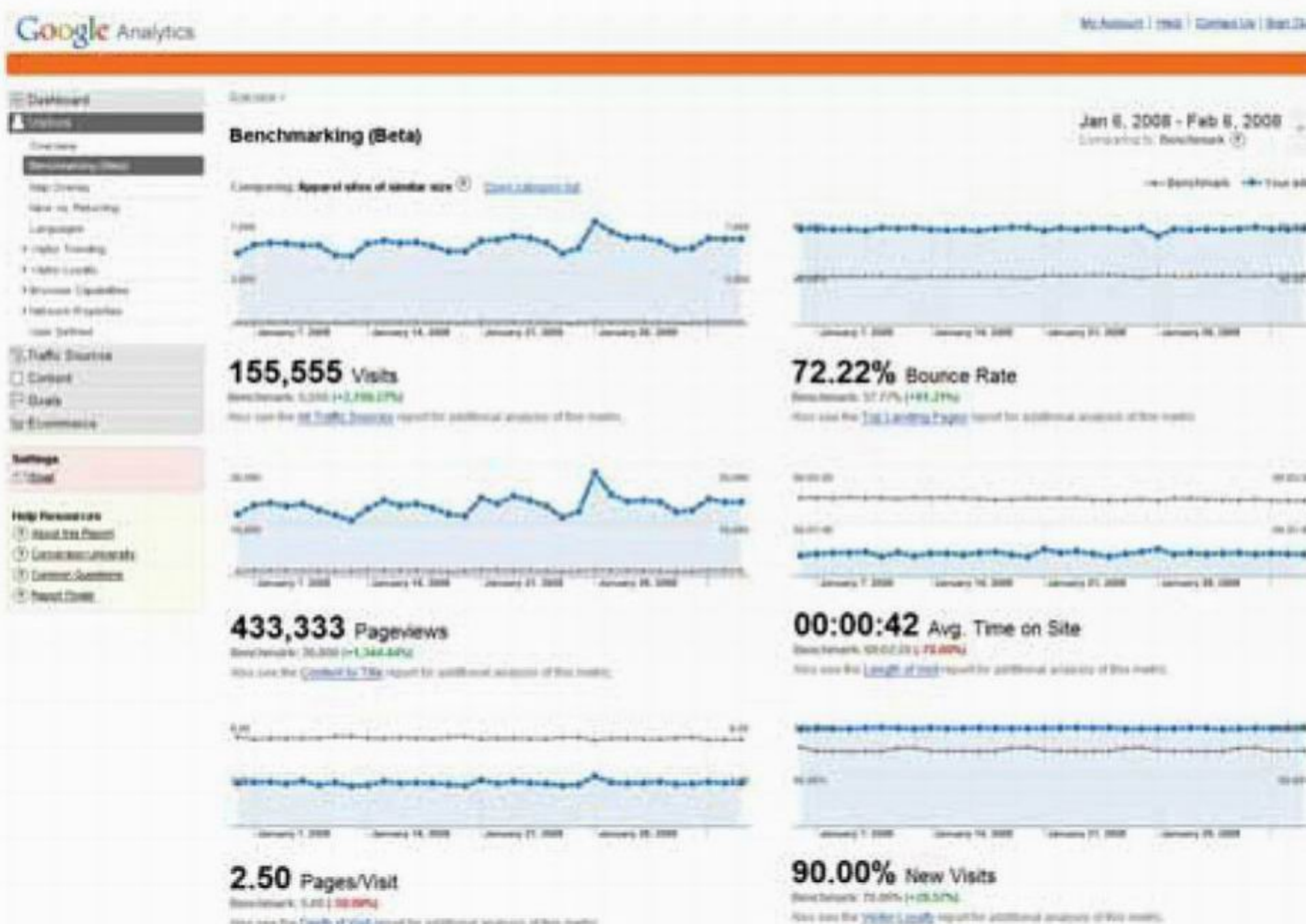
For any retailer, using and taking action on the metrics available from the free Google Analytics application is a huge step forward. It can help to tightly align your buying, visual merchandising, website, marketing and advertising teams in order to attract new customers who are looking for companies that understand them, listen to them, engage with them and advertise to them with offers based on their real interests.

Once your customers understand that you are authentically and consistently targeting your messages to their particu-

lar needs, your opportunity to gain market share, margins and referrals can increase exponentially. These customers, cultivated intelligently through your use of leading edge website analytics are likely to become your biggest advocates in both the real and online worlds.

Leslie Carothers, is a 25 year veteran of the home furnishings industry and the principal of The Kaleidoscope Partnership - a national company that helps retailers and manufacturers leverage the internet and their websites to powerfully and profitably impact their businesses. Her areas of expertise include: Using analytics to drive profitable growth through different business units; writing content for retail and manufacturer websites; increasing conversion rates from phone or email inquiries; and helping retailers and manufacturers lay out their websites for maximum ease of consumer and consultant use and functionality.

Questions on any aspect of internet marketing including how to use website analytics, can be directed to Leslie via the [furninfo.com](http://furninfo.com) message boards or email [leslie@furninfo.com](mailto:leslie@furninfo.com). She can also be reached directly at 713.705.2482



You can see how your website is performing with different date ranges-at a glance. This allows you to immediately see the results of a direct mail campaign or an ad that was placed in a more traditional media format.





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# Help Bedding Customers To COOL IT!

Part 1: Customers need more than just a mattress.  
They are really looking for a good night's sleep!

*Sleep Physiology & Technology by Guys Eckert*

In the past decade, awareness about the importance of a good night's sleep has increased dramatically. The bedding industry and consumers alike have reaped the benefits of new medical knowledge about sleep and the body's sleep physiology.

Dr. James Maas, pioneer in the field of sleep research, helped bring this knowledge to the masses with his 1998 Best Seller, "Power Sleep". In his book, the Cornell University professor tackles such topics as sleep physiology and ways to help improve the quality of sleep. Getting regular exercise, for example, is just one of the factors in helping one drift into unconsciousness at bedtime. Bedroom environment and diet also matter.

William C. Dement, MD, PhD and founder of the world's first sleep disorders

center at Stanford University also explored the physiology of sleep. Dr. Dement was the first to intensively study the connection between rapid eye movement (REM sleep) and dreaming. In his book, "The Promise of Sleep," Dr. Dement teaches how to "reclaim healthy sleep" in one's own life by adopting a "sleep-smart lifestyle."

Harvard professor and founder of the Behavioral Medicine Insomnia Program, Gregg Jacobs, not only explored how to achieve healthy sleep, but actually overcome insomnia. One of the most important factors he stresses: developing a sleep-enhancing lifestyle including diet, exercise, and an understanding of the importance of body temperature.

An informed consumer now looks for much more than initial comfort in their

bedding – and it's our responsibility to be a knowledgeable resource on the particulars of sleep physiology.

Historically, the bedding industry has struggled to rid itself of the commodity label and longed for the day when a new mattress was mentioned in the same breath as a vacation or health club membership. Now that medical science has confirmed and stressed the importance of healthy sleep, that day has finally arrived at retail. The bedding industry has matured before our very eyes. Bedding technologies now encompass everything from memory foam and performance fabrics to synthetic and natural fill pillow tops.

This article is the first in a two-part series exploring the physiology of sleep, the evolution of bedding products, value



# How Direct Response Marketing Can Increase Your Sales And Profits

It's no secret that times have been difficult for retailers over the past several months in the home furnishings industry.

Talk of recession abounds. GOB sales all around you... customers holding back the purse strings because of economic uncertainty, and gloom and doom all over the news make for a difficult retail cycle now and into 2008.

However there is good news.

**NEW PROGRAM GIVES YOU ADS, MAILERS, AND MARKETING PIECES PROVEN TO PUT CUSTOMERS IN YOUR STORE... ALREADY DONE FOR YOU!**

Even during tough times many retailers thrive, gain market share, and make more money than ever before. *They do it by marketing effectively to get new members.*

If you think people aren't buying furniture or bedding, just look at the IKEA parking lot. It's full from morning till night!

The problem isn't that people *aren't spending money*.

The problem isn't that people *aren't spending money*. It's that retailers aren't advertising effectively to get customers to come see them.

It's that retailers aren't advertising effectively to get customers to come see them, instead of IKEA, Costco, Sam's Club, or any number of other big box competitors.

## Getting Customers In The Door Is EVERYTHING.

There's nothing more frustrating than spending thousands of dollars on advertising and getting poor results. It's enough to drive you crazy!

It's really quite simple. No customers mean no sales. *The number one priority of every store owner in the world should be MARKETING* to get new and past customers into the store.

The problem is marketing can be a fickle, difficult and unpredictable thing. What worked in the past isn't **working any more...there's nothing more frustrating than spending thousands of dollars on advertising and getting poor results**. It's enough to drive you crazy! (Believe me, I've been there too!)

## The Solution Is A New Kind Of Marketing

Well, not new *really*. But **very new** to most home furnishings retailers. It's called Direct Response Marketing. You've probably read several of my articles in this magazine, even received information from us in the mail.

**But Things Have Changed, And We've Changed Too!**

Over the past year Ethan and I have been *teaching* our 200+ retailer members how to use this new kind of marketing to **increase sales with great results**. The problem is learning and creating this type of marketing is difficult, time consuming, and expensive to learn.

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promises and how to accurately convey these messages to consumers at the point of sale.

## THE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

*Wall color, lighting, feng shui, room temperature, and sleep surface all contribute. Is there a better place to address all of these issues than a full service retail furniture store?*

## SLEEP PHYSIOLOGY

Sleep experts like Drs. Maas, Dement and Jacobs all agree that – aside from living a generally healthy lifestyle – one of the most important factors in getting a good night's sleep is the entire sleep environment. Wall color, lighting, feng shui, room temperature, and sleep surface all contribute. Is there a better place to address all of these issues than a full service retail furniture store?

With our hectic schedules, it can be a challenge to get a solid eight hours of sleep every night. Our daily balancing act of work, family, friends and everything else leaves little time to worry about keeping our bedrooms in an "optimum sleep condition". There are, how-

# 16 Bedding SALES TIPS

BY PETER MARINO

- 1 Create rapport with the customers. Don't make this a grim experience. You're not selling caskets.
- 2 Find out what their current mattress is like. Was it once a comfortable mattress that gradually lost its comfort?
- 3 What's wrong with its current performance? Does it sag? Is its edge support gone?
- 4 Make shopping for a mattress a pleasant experience. Customers don't buy when they're mad, sad, or scared. They only buy when they're glad. Make them glad.
- 5 Shoe salespeople don't just show their shoes; they have their customers try them out. Don't merely point to your mattresses. Have the customers try them, and not just for a few seconds.
- 6 Once you get through the regularly asked closed probes having to do with size, who's going to be sleeping on the mattress, etc., start to ask some open probes, such as, "Mind telling me what the most important thing you're looking for in your new mattress?"
- 7 Tell your customers you are going to have them go through comfort buying. Don't refer to it as comfort selling. Unfortunately, the word selling has negative connotations like the words taxes and mortgages.
- 8 You can never know too much about your sleep sets, but you can talk too much about them. Customers don't come in to learn about how to manufacture a sleep set. Were that the case, your owner would have advertised for them to go to a mattress factory.
- 9 If you are selling in a furniture store, you may need to guide your customers to your store's sleep shop. Along the way, develop good rapport with your customers, and if you have the time, get some valuable information from them. You might try the 3-step opening: "Would you mind telling me, on the way to our sleep shop, what your greatest concern is about buying a mattress? That way I can skip all those questions that have nothing to do with why you're here. Would that be all right?" You can use the same 3-step opening if you work in a sleep shop. Simply skip the words "on the way to our sleep shop."
- 10 Regarding the manufacturers specs, take your cue from the customer. Most customers don't want to hear about the specs. No matter how good you are at explaining them, most customers just end up confused. If the customer should ask about the specs, explain them as briefly as you can by using the model samples with which your store provides you.
- 11 Don't talk features and benefits until your customer gets on one of your mattresses and his or her body language tells you he or she likes



"When I pre-shop for furniture, if a retailer doesn't have **online** catalogs, I'll find another one who does."

**FACT:** 80% to 90% of women age 33 to 45, the key demographic of furniture shoppers, shop online before visiting a showroom.

In today's Internet-driven world, having a website is not only a smart business decision, it's absolutely essential if you want to prosper in retail furniture. But you have to make that site interesting with lots of options and lots of choices.

Nothing does that more efficiently or cost-effectively than MicroD's ePreVue electronic catalog. With it, you can literally display every case good and upholstered furniture item from every PreVue-supported manufacturer you carry. Then, using EasyPlan - ePreVue's software companion, your shoppers can place their selected items into their own custom-created room plan to see how it fits into their home *and* into their own sense of style.

To find out more, see us at the Las Vegas Market, World Market Center, Bldg. B 16th Floor, Retail Resource Center July 28 - August 1, 2008.

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# COOL IT!

ever, some simple things that can be done in order to achieve a better night's sleep. But first, we must know the basics of sleep physiology:



- Your body must cool down in order to go to sleep.
- Your body continues to cool off during the evening until just before you awake.
- Your body begins preparing for sleep at sundown when your retina sends a signal to your brain - which, in turn, sends a signal to the pineal gland to begin to produce Melatonin.
- Melatonin is a naturally occurring chemical that lowers your body temperature and makes you drowsy (this has the same impact as taking a warm shower before going to bed; your body temperature elevates while in the shower, then cools once you come out). That change in temperature makes you drowsy and helps you pre-

pare for sleep.

- There are 5 phases of sleep in a typical sleep cycle with the 5th being the all-important REM (Rapid Eye Movement) sleep. Studies have shown that REM propensity increases when your body temperature is at its lowest point during sleep...typically in the early morning hours. during REM your brain reorganizes and recharges for the next day. This is also the state in which you experience vivid dreams.
- You must go through all 5 phases of sleep consecutively in order to

achieve REM sleep. If you wake up in the middle of Phase 3, you don't fall back asleep and pick up where you left off. You will have to successfully complete Phases 1 and 2 again.

- Most sleep experts recommend setting your room temperature between 65 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit for optimum sleep.

Since most consumers don't know all the technical details of sleep physiology, it's our responsibility to explain it. Remember – having knowledge about and explaining these topics will also dif-

Continued from page 18

that one. At that point you might say something like the following; "What you're liking about this mattress is the way it cradles and caresses you as it supports you. Let me show you a sample of the foam on this mattress. It's the same foam that burn centers use to conform to the sensitive bodies of burn victims. Features tell, but benefits sell.

**12** The best way to handle a price objection is to make use of the following sayings before objection ever comes up:

- (a) When you buy quality, you cry only once.
- (b) You don't always get what you pay for, but you hardly ever get what you don't pay for.
- (c) Price is much like condiments; you should be putting them on food that already tastes good. Price alone won't ever give you a good night's sleep, or your present mattress would be doing that for you. It's already paid for!

**13** In asking for the sale, timing is everything. But keep in mind that timing must always be accompanied by buying signals. The stronger, the better. It is at the point of asking for the sale that all the little things you did to create excellent rapport with your customer pay off. Remember, customers don't buy when they are mad, sad, scared; only when they are glad.

**14** Remember that rapport is both a state and a process, and that it is a volatile state. As soon as you discontinue the process that won you rapport, it can vanish in a second.

**15** When you ask for the sale, do so with confidence. Remember the Roman poet Livy's words: Confidence begets confidence.

**16** Handle every customer objection as an implied need. Your task is to support the implied need, and not to look upon the objection as an adversary to be overcome. Selling is a collaborative process, not a competitive one.



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# HELP BEDDING CUSTOMERS COOL IT!

ferentiate you from your competition. When purchasing a bed, most consumers simply lie down to see if they feel "comfortable". Unfortunately, this is often in the middle of a very crowded, noisy showroom with bright lights and temperatures not conducive to relaxation. As sleep experts, you can help create an environment that will more accurately reflect the optimum sleep environment, educating your customer and creating a scenario that will ultimately lead to your customer making the proper purchase.

Historically, home textiles retailers have stressed the technique of layering

bedding products to consumers. This process can actually work against them and contribute to many sleepless nights! Remember, we're all walking furnaces...there's warm moisture radiating off our skin at all times. Creating their own little sleep cocoon may look fashionable, but it can actually work against what our customers' bodies are naturally trying to do – and that's cool down. The heat radiating from their skin gets trapped inside the cocoon, causing the relative humidity and microclimate temperature to elevate. If they're like 80% of the consumers in this country, the next step involves throwing the covers off or

sticking a leg out to cool down. When they get too cool, the leg comes back in and the covers come back on. Some consumers do that for the first 15 minutes they're in bed, and others do that all night long. Think about it - if they toss and turn for a total of one hour each night, by the end of week they've lost the equivalent of a full night's sleep!

Now that we know what it takes to achieve a good night's sleep, we can continue in the next issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine to look at emerging technologies that are paving the way to better sleep. We'll not only delve into new bedding technologies, but also look at examples of manufacturers who are pioneering the bedding market through product development and retailers whose innovative point-of-sale, marketing and advertising strategies are paying huge dividends.

Guys Eckert has been with Outlast Technologies since 1999. He is responsible for product development, supply chain management, sales and marketing, and overall profit and loss for the business unit. Guy is an expert in specialized bedding, top of bed products, mattresses and more. He possesses a unique point of view on how new technologies are advancing the future of the bedding industry and permanently raising the bar for comfort standards. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

Outlast Technologies, Inc. a pioneer in developing phase-change materials and applications. As an innovative technology company, Outlast has launched temperature-regulating technology in apparel, footwear, bedding and accessories. Originally developed for NASA, Outlast® fibers, fabrics and coatings contain patented microencapsulated phase-change materials called Thermocules™, which absorb, store, and release heat, providing increased comfort for consumers.

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# Updated For Digital Age - 7 Lost AD SECRETS

Part 5: You use People Media™ every day whether you know it or not. They determine your "Brand," but are you maximizing their potential?

*Advertising Strategies by Larry Mullins*

"Mother, will you please look at me just once as though you really saw me?" That sad line is from the famous play, *Our Town*, by Thornton Wilder. So, what has it got to do with selling furniture? If you can use your imagination, a great deal. Because, many people who work in furniture stores and many shoppers have the same feeling as Emily Webb, the character in the play who uttered those words. Why? Because few furniture stores have great People Media™.

People Media™ begin at the top. They are character-driven. You may be thinking: "Hey, wait a minute. Isn't this article supposed to be about the digital age and branding my store? I don't need a lecture about character." I'm sure you don't. But, the most important message store owners can take home today is that their store's Brand begins with their own personal Brand. All of us have a Brand.

We cannot fake it.

Whether you are a CEO, or in sales, or are a vendor, or a delivery person, or any other associate, you also have a personal Brand. It has been said that the salesperson is the store to the customer. This is true enough. In fact, every associate in the store is, by degree, the store. So is the delivery captain (more on that later), and to an even greater degree, the boss.

There are four principle factors that quickly project your Brand:

- How do I look?
- How do I sound?
- What do I say?
- How well do I listen?

An astonishing fifty-five percent of your Brand is communicated by facial expression and body language alone. Your

voice—not including your words—may transmit as much as thirty-eight percent of your meaning in face-to-face communications. And your words (at least in the first minute or less) account for only seven percent of your communication. If you don't like the way your associates are expressing the Brand of your company, there is a strong possibility they are modeling you. If not you, then they are modeling your managers, who in turn are likely modeling you.

In his book, *The Irresistible Offer... How to Sell Your Product in Three Seconds or Less*, Mark Joyner suggests that his own sales super-guru Brand requires several elements. (You can adjust these elements any way you want for your status as super furniture entrepreneur, or super sales person, or whatever):

- Impeccable grooming

Wendell uses no dazzling graphics, but the Brand, the story, and the personality of the store are projected through and through. When he uses his photo and introduces his associates in print advertising, it is especially effective because he has already established a Brand with the community.



# IT DOESN'T HAVE TO COST A FORTUNE TO EFFECTIVELY "BRAND" ON YOUR WEBSITE

Wendell Farrell, of Wendell's Furniture of Colchester, Vermont, is a customer-oriented furniture entrepreneur who has vividly branded himself. Wendell's website is nothing spectacular, but it is very customer-oriented and easy to use. And it has features none of the big boxes have. Instead of a self-congratulatory, boring paragraph "about us" and a photo of the owner of the company, Wendell's website features several 30 second clips of Wendell, sitting relaxed in the showroom talking directly to the customer. This might sound a bit egoistic, but Wendell has a knack of framing his story almost completely around the customer's interest. It's all in the sincerity of delivery. Read Wendell's story in this article.

- Friendly smile
- Confident posture
- Outgoing and kind nature
- "My spirit shining through"
- First words: Something disarming and friendly

Joyner adds this note: "Some people may read these words and want to vomit, and that's OK. Cynical and sarcastic people may not like guys like me, and that's cool. My [Brand] will sort right through them. I don't want to be around them and they don't want to be around me. No worries."

Since you are still reading, I will presume you find the list of qualities that Joyner recommends is at least worth considering. And, hopefully you buy into the premise that your character is the primary molder of your store's Brand. You understand that the quality of your People Media™ begins with what you project to your associates, your customers, and your vendors. What are you communicating to your managers and associates? Integrity? Confidence? Grace and power? Caring? Or fear, annoyance and lack of confidence?

What next? The quality of your People Media is reflected in everything the customer encounters during the shopping

experience. The shopping experience begins with the setting of their expectations (from advertising, a friend, pure luck, or your website). It continues through the appearance of your parking lot, showroom, bathrooms, your associates, and through the selling sequences. Previous FURNITURE WORLD Magazine articles that have covered these topics in detail can be found in the furninfo.com website marketing article archives. The shopping experience, for most stores, ends with the delivery (unless there is a service or quality problem). It should not end there, but it usually does.

## HOW TO BRING CUSTOMERS BACK

I once interviewed over three hundred associates for a large furniture chain. It was a great education that really came alive while speaking with the delivery crews. I happened to meet an interesting delivery captain. When asked to describe his job, he responded by saying, "Look, I am the most important person in the sales process. I resell every customer on the purchase they made. I tell them how great it looks, and how they made a great selection that their family and friends will admire. There is never buyer's remorse when I deliver some-

thing."

This beautifully arrogant statement stayed with me. My wife and I recently had a leather sectional delivered to our home in St. Augustine. The delivery captain did a great job. He demonstrated the piece, gave us hints on care, and left his card if anything else was needed. Now, my experience as a furniture customer was eye-opening. I got to thinking, what could be added to this delivery sequence, this exceptional People Media, that would make it even better?

First off, consider the formula created by Jay Abraham that was presented in the March/April 2008 issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine. Jay stated that there are three, and only three, ways to increase your business.

- Increase your number of customers.
- Increase the size of your tickets.
- Increase the number of times your customers visit your store.

Moreover, Jay claimed that a mere 10% increase in each of these categories will double your volume. Here are some specific ways that will measurably increase your volume in two of these three categories. I'm sure you can brainstorm more improvements to the delivery sequence.

The image displays three screenshots of the Wendell's Furniture website. The top screenshot shows the homepage with a navigation menu on the left, a central image of a showroom, and text promoting 'Interest Free Financing' and 'Apply Here Then Come Into Our Store'. The middle screenshot shows a 'Wendell's Furniture' page with a grid of links to various product categories like 'Broyhill', 'Flexsteel', and 'Searline'. The bottom screenshot shows a 'Wendell's Furniture' page with a grid of links to various product categories like 'Broyhill', 'Flexsteel', and 'Searline'.





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## AFTER PLACING THE RECLINER OR SOFA IN THE RIGHT PLACE

*and admiring how great it looks and stating what an excellent buy the customer has made, the delivery captain hands the customer a gift. This gift has three parts.*

**SUGGESTED SCENARIO:** After placing the recliner or sofa in the right place and admiring how great it looks and stating what an excellent buy the customer has made (before thrusting the scary-looking paperwork at her), the delivery captain hands the customer a gift. This gift has three parts. First, it has a lovely thank you card from the salesperson. "Mrs. Smith, your sales adviser, Jane Consultant, asked me to be sure to pass this along to you." Later, Mrs. Smith will learn that inside is a personal note from Jane Consultant thanking her for the purchase, and assuring Mrs. Smith that Jane will personally be glad to help if there is ever a need. Sales persons should look at any future contact with Mrs. Smith, not as an annoyance, but rather as another opportunity to exceed her expectations for quality and service. Inside are a couple of cards from Jane Consultant, and a final little note along these lines: "The greatest honor you can give me is to recommend my services to a friend ..."

Next, the little gift pack contains a small brochure selling your store. Yes, you should have one by now. It is critical that such a "portable website" be handed to every guest who happens into your store. This silent salesperson tells your story and introduces your unique Brand in the best possible way. It makes sense to leave your prospects and customers with a reminder of how great you and your team are. Once the creative work is done, such a flyer is relatively inexpensive. Finally, consider placing other surprises in the "Come Back" package to wow your customer and exceed their expectations. Perhaps include a special coupon or an invitation to your next decorating seminar. This key element

in building business has been covered in Margaret DeGange's multi-part *Decorating Crash Course* series in FURNITURE WORLD Magazine, that is posted to the article archives area on [www.furninfo.com](http://www.furninfo.com). It would also be a nice touch if the delivery captain handed his card to the customer. Or, at least a card stating "Delivered with pride by \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ Furniture."

OK, it will be a lot of fuss to create and police a program like this. But, remember that it costs eight times more to get a new customer than to keep an old one. And, if this technique works only one out of ten times in getting a referral or bringing a customer back into your store, it will reach Abraham's ten percent criterion for doubling your store's business!

### WILL YOU DO IT?

I got a couple of responses from store owners who wanted to know if I was serious when I wrote that only one percent of people who read Jay Abraham's book will follow his advice. The answer is yes. Only about one percent excel on world-class levels in any given field. To illustrate this, I pass along a little story. Mark Joyner is a top consultant-guru. He tells in his aforementioned book that he once gave a seminar to a few hundred people, and he asked this question: "How many of you have ever heard of Napoleon Hill's book, *Think and Grow Rich*?" Almost everyone in the room stood up. "How many of you have read it?" Nearly everyone remained standing. Joyner then said: "If any of you still standing don't believe that following the principles in this book will make you rich and successful beyond your wildest dreams, I want you to sit down right now."



# LOST AD SECRETS

Everyone remained standing. Then Mark noted that on page 38 of the trade publication of Think and Grow Rich, Napoleon Hill suggests that—if you want to have success with his book and get rich—it is imperative to use his formula to craft a brief personal statement, commit it to memory, and repeat it twice daily until the dough comes rolling in. Joyner then said that since everyone still standing believes in the book, surely someone will come up on the stage and recite their success statement. He said everyone else should sit down. You probably guessed it. Everyone sat down.

One percent of furniture entrepreneurs and salespeople are shakers and movers and only a few successful independents will at least seriously consider the delivery sequence advice suggested earlier. One in particular comes to mind. His story, coming from the front lines of the furniture industry, is worth ten articles by ivory tower experts. Wendell Farrell, of Wendell's Furniture of Colchester, Vermont, is a customer-oriented furniture

entrepreneur. He has vividly branded himself. A natural at projecting good People Media, Wendell Furniture is one of the few furniture stores that had a good year last year. And Wendell grew his business in the face of a famous Big Box competitor. In fact, he helped compel them to close their doors after a short run and leave town! How did Wendell do it? Read on.

## WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD BOX?

When a big box came to Colchester in 2005, it frightened many stores on furniture row. And it hurt them all at first with great looks, low prices and huge ad budgets. It seemed as though nothing could stop the big box. Meanwhile, away from furniture row, Wendell ignored the big box, and kept plusing his own brand. "Plusing" is a term Walt Disney used to indicate taking a good concept idea and adding to it to make it better. Wendell's did not try to outgun the big box. He carried his traditional lines and stuck to

them. Before very long the big box was fading, and eventually, unceremoniously closed its doors.

So what is so great about how Wendell advertises his Brand? It's all about the customer. When a customer calls Wendell's on the phone, Wendell Farrell himself is as likely to answer as anyone ... "Good afternoon, this is Wendell. How may I help you?" Well thought out and practiced phone etiquette is an important, yet often ignored aspect of furniture store brand-building. Associates need to be supplied with a script to do it right. Something along the lines of, "Good afternoon, (store name), this is Jane Smith. How may I help you?" Or, "Good afternoon (store name), How may I help you? This is Jane Smith." Research has shown that customers will remember a person's name if it is stated last. The benefit of this technique is that the customer will often start their reply by restating the Associates name, putting the ensuing conversation on a more personal basis. So often Associates simply

**O AT HOME**

### A Brief History of the Peacock Chair in Pop Culture

It's been around for hundreds of years, but this high-back wicker seat still struts. Take a look at the peacock's unexpected staying power.

**1950:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *Mad Men*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**1960:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**1970:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**1980:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Cosby Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**1990:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Seinfeld Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**2000:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Friends Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**2010:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Big Bang Theory Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**2020:** The chair was featured in the popular TV show *The Modern Family Show*, where the peacock chair was the go-to for the show's characters.

**LOOK WHAT WE FOUND!**

### Plants You Really Can't Kill

Unable to keep even cacti alive? These life-size porcelain imitations require no care—except for, perhaps, an occasional dusting. (Part of three, \$88. Total Home: [totalhome.com](http://totalhome.com))

30 SPRING 2008 • 5 BY PAGE

## WOMEN READ STORIES ABOUT FURNITURE...

The current issue of O AT HOME Magazine by Oprah Winfrey devoted a page to the old Peacock chair. By telling a background story, about a piece of furniture (that most of us have forgotten), this piece suddenly becomes a desirable item.

This FURNITURE WORLD Magazine article tells how a retailer uses the internet to Brand his store and to creatively tell stories about his home furnishings products. There is more product information, more consumer benefits, and more unique selling features in one of his 30 second spots than most big boxes use in an entire copy-starved flyer!



# UNDERPROMISE. OVER DELIVER.



(l. to r.) Frank Lewis, Owner,  
Country Manor Furniture, Inc.;  
Paul Roy, PFP promotion manager

“I met with five different companies to see whom would be best for my business . . . my meeting with, and speaking with your company representative was very comprehensive and very comfortable for me . . . the sale went way beyond my expectations . . . I was delighted with the smoothness of the sale from the onset to the completion. Every aspect exceeded my expectations . . .”

Frank Lewis, President  
Country Manor Furniture, Rocky Point, NY

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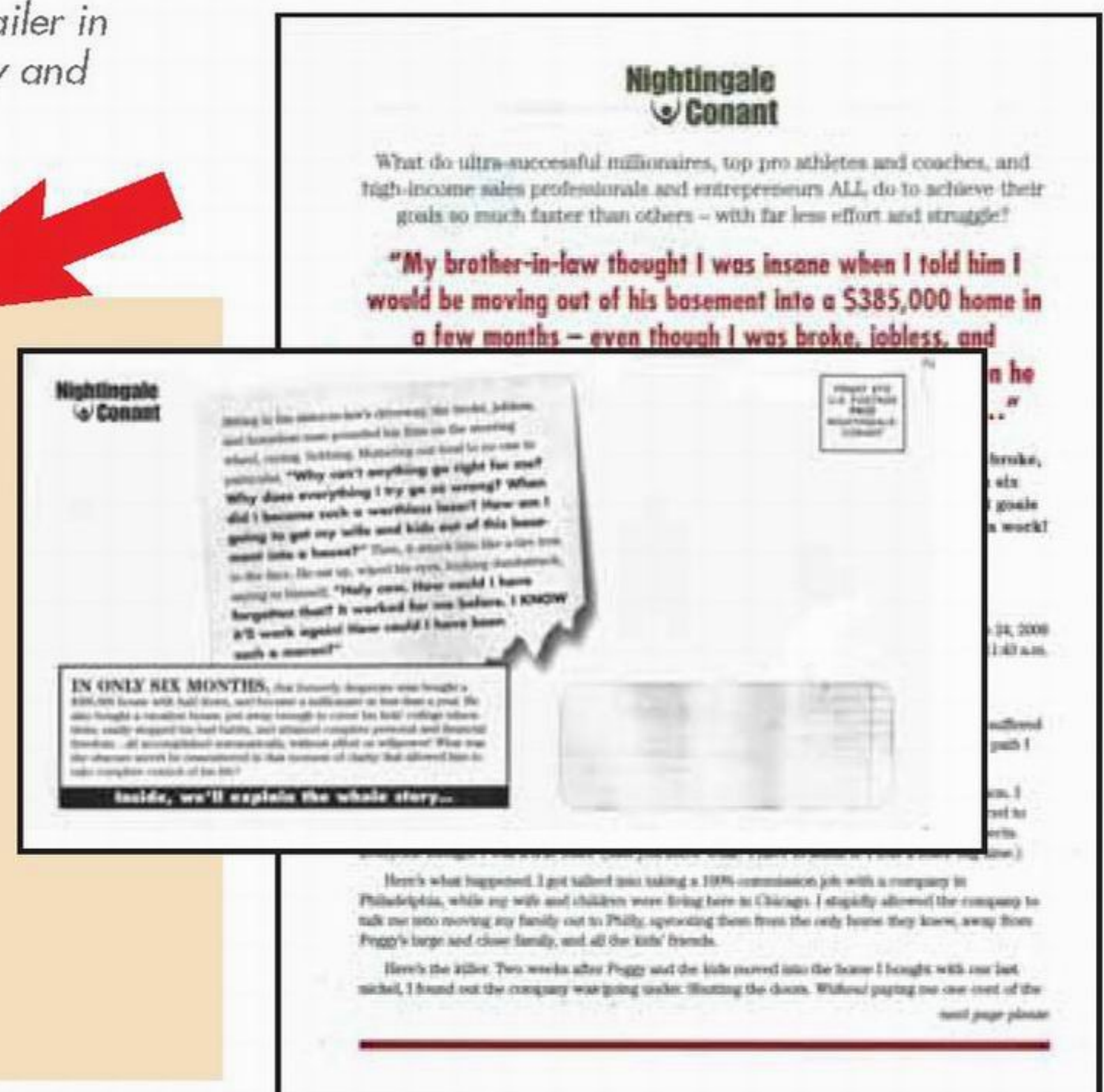
## SHOULD DIRECT MAIL BE DISGUISED AS A FIRST CLASS PERSONAL COMMUNICATION?

Should direct mail be disguised as a first class personal communication? Views differ on this. But Mullins points out that Nightingale-Conant's extremely successful direct-mail pieces capture prospects with a great story, and then carry them along to an irresistible offer. People love good stories. Note how this powerful narrative pulls you in. Hard to resist checking it out, isn't it? The secret of learning to tell your story and communicate your Brand in a compelling way is to relate it to the consumer's own interest. Read in this article how one retailer in Colchester, Vermont took on a big box by telling his story and projecting his Brand.

Sitting in his sister-in-law's driveway, the broke, homeless man pounded his fists on the steering wheel, crying, sobbing. "Why can't anything go right for me? Why does everything I try go wrong? When did I become such a worthless loser? How am I going to get my wife and kids out of this basement and into a house?" Then it struck him like a tire iron to the face. He sat up, wiped his eyes, looking dumbstruck, saying to himself, "Holy cow. How could I have forgotten that? It worked for me before. I KNOW it will work again! How could I have been such a moron?"

In only six months, that formerly desperate man had bought a \$385,000 house with half down, and became a millionaire in less than a year. He also bought a vacation house, put away enough money for his kid's college education, easily stopped bad habits, and attained complete financial freedom ... all accomplished automatically, without effort or willpower! What was the obscure secret he remembered in that moment of clarity that allowed him to take complete control of his life?

Inside, we'll explain the whole story ...



grumble the store name, whatever it may be. Not only does Wendell often answer the phone, he loves to wait on customers. According to Britt Beemer of America's Research Group, people feel honored when the owner of a store waits on them. Wendell's associates are all salaried, so there is no friction when Wendell takes an UP. Wendell will even make you a cup of fresh down-home coffee in the store's kitchen. Did I say store's kitchen? Yes. For more information on the power of the imagery of the home to American consumers, review the FURNITURE WORLD Magazine article, "The Code That Unlocks Customer's Hearts & Wallets" (Parts 1&2) that is posted to the marketing management article archives on the [www.furninfo.com](http://www.furninfo.com) website.

These are simple and inexpensive

techniques that any furniture store can do in its own way. Let's look at Wendell's website, for example. It was set up by a member of Wendell's staff, Mike Prevuzmak. Nothing spectacular. But it is very customer-oriented and easy to use. And it has features none of the big boxes have. Instead of a self-congratulatory, boring paragraph "about us" (that no one ever reads) and a photo of the owner of the company, Wendell's website features several 30 second clips of Wendell, sitting relaxed in the showroom talking directly to the customer. This might sound a bit egoistic, but Wendell has a knack of framing his story almost completely around the customer's interest. It's all in the sincerity of delivery. Here is a sample script:

"Here at Wendell's Furniture we really, really value the customer. The sales help

is phenomenal. They treat everybody the same, everyone gets taken care of. No one is on commission at Wendell's, talk to anybody in a blue shirt. Everybody takes care of you, everybody makes deals. We do not allow any customer to be unhappy. Here at Wendell's Furniture, we take care of you." (Super-imposed over the screen are the words: "Your total satisfaction is our main priority.")

Another good spot features Wendell walking casually in the showroom ... "High folks, it's Flexsteel authorized sale time. This is the big one..." (Cut to Wendell on his knees by a sofa. He has a marking pen in his hand.) "This is the newest in Microfiber technology and only Flexsteel has it" (Wendell is touching the arm of the sofa as he says this.) (Cut to close up of Wendell's hand holding the marking pen. He marks several swipes





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# LOST AD SECRETS

on the sofa arm.) "See the ink?" (Rubbing it off) Now the ink has gone – with just a Handy Wipe." (Cut to Wendell kneeling beside a leather recliner) "Just feel the quality of this leather on this Flexsteel Recliner." (Cut to Wendell kneeling beside an occasional chair) "Why buy Flexsteel?" (Wendell flips the chair over exposing the springs. He reaches in and grabs one, pulling on it) "It's just about indestructible. You can't wear it out, and you can't break it." (Cut to full showroom, large Super with sig: "15% TO 20% OFF FLEXSTEEL FACTORY AUTHORIZED SALE") "At 15 to 20% savings, this is the time to purchase your beautiful Flexsteel furniture, exclusively at Wendell's Furniture" (Cut to outside store shot with address and phone supped over.)

There is more product information, more consumer benefits, and more unique selling features in this 30-second commercial than most big boxes use in

an entire copy-starved flyer! Yet there is nothing difficult to execute and nothing spectacular. This is the kind of Branding that you can adapt and start doing now. The big boxes are too busy being big to let the human side of their story and their desire to serve show through. I should emphasize again, though: Wendell's delivery in his commercials is exceptional. His sincerity, and his Brand, shine through in how he talks, his body language and in his appearance in the ubiquitous Wendell's "blue shirt." It is worth a trip to [wendellsfurniture.com](http://wendellsfurniture.com) to see him do his thing.

There's more. Wendell has a "Shopping Guide" tab. If you open it, you are able to access general information about buying furniture and mattresses. (This one could be improved with a couple of additional streams or clips featuring Wendell.) Also, you can click on "Our Suppliers" (Better would be "Our Famous Brands") and immediately

access the websites of Wendell's key brands, such as Flexsteel, el ran, Berkline, Benchcraft, etc. Berkline has an excellent site, by the way, with an option-

## FOR HIGH IMPACT PROMOTIONS,

*sell your product quickly and directly with an "irresistible" offer on the envelope. Then, expand on the offer inside.*

al virtual human being "guide." Benchcraft had one too. But, I wonder why these huge companies can't use the CEO to deliver some kind of a short personal message to the consumer in the Wendell fashion? Using only slick pros and carefully crafted scripts dampen the authenticity of the presentation. Wendell uses no dazzling graphics, etc., but the Brand, the story, and the personality of the store are projected through and through. When Wendell uses his photo and introduces his associates in print advertising, it is especially effective because he has already established a Brand with the community.

There are weaknesses in the site, I know. I could nitpick. But compared to what the big boxes do, this one connects. It is real, believable, and human. Not so with the big boxes. One big box, claiming to be mattress experts, shows nothing but sizes and prices. No personal connection, no benefits, no unique selling propositions, no arresting concepts about the expertise of the associates or ease of selection (the mass of tiny mattress illustrations and prices are overwhelming). Moreover, the assurance of satisfaction has almost as much small print as a real estate contract.

## DIRECT MAIL OFFERS

I regret that there is no more space to spend with you this month. But I have one more thing to tell you. Someone



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*-Don Olsen, Owner*

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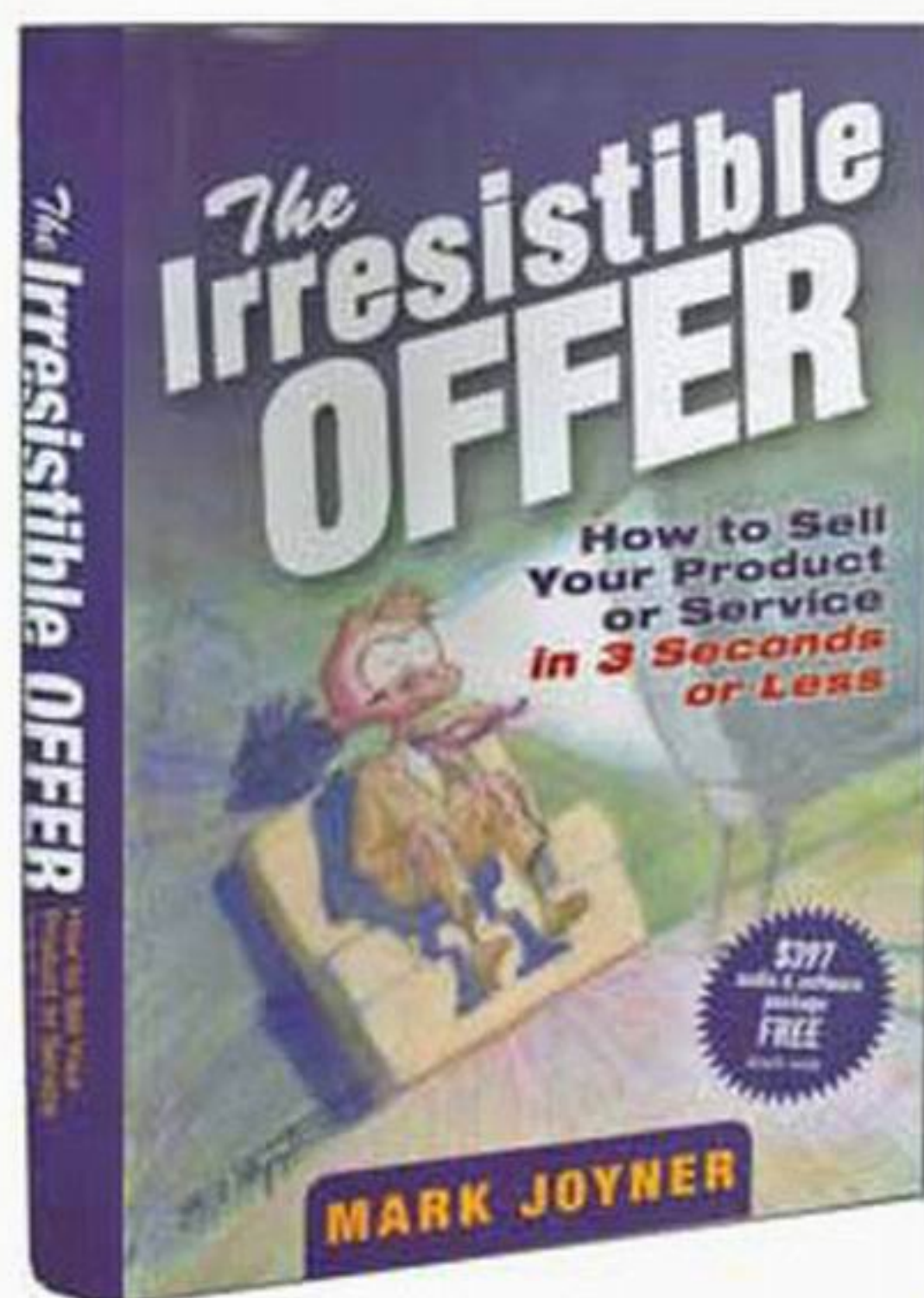
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# LOST AD SECRETS



For high impact furniture promotions, sell your product quickly and directly with an "irresistible" offer on the envelope. Then, expand on the offer inside. Wow your customers and exceed their expectations when they respond by visiting your store. Install techniques to bring customers back and encourage them to tell their friends about you. The letter below did great volume during bitter Minnesota weather this winter.



wrote me and asked if you should try to disguise a direct mail piece to make it look like a personal first class mail letter from a friend. The argument is that more people will open the letter. True enough, but that's as far as it goes, the next stop will be the trash can. Among the top direct marketers I know are the Nightingale-Conant folks. Check out the exhibit in this article, and note how their direct-appeal drags you into the letter.

For high impact furniture promotions, I suggest you adopt this technique I use for direct mail: Sell your product quickly and directly with an "irresistible" offer on the envelope. Then, expand on the offer inside. Wow your customers and exceed their expectations when they respond and come to your store. Establish and practice techniques to bring customers back and encourage them to tell their friends about you.

Yes, I am aware you don't have time for all of this. So, develop a team of a few young lions to work with you and pursue these ideas. What incentive do they have? They get to learn something valuable. Young people today are motivated by training, learning something that will give them an edge. Reward some aspiring person with an eye of the tiger to study copywriting by getting some of the great advertising books for them or paying for his or her writing course. Time spent training and brainstorming your Brand is not down time, it will repay you many times over. Most of all: Don't just talk about your Brand, begin to LIVE your Brand. I look forward to our next visit.

Contributing Editor Larry Mullins has 30+ years experience in the front lines of furniture marketing. Over the past ten years he has developed a Visionary Management program that can impact the culture of an entire organization and bring it to life. He also produces state-of-the-art promotional advertising packages for everything from quick cash flow to complete exit strategies and store closings. Larry is the President of UltraSales, Inc.. Questions about this article can be sent to Larry care of FURNITURE WORLD to [mullins@furninfo.com](mailto:mullins@furninfo.com).

See more articles by Larry in the marketing management archives on [furninfo.com](http://furninfo.com) or call him direct at (904) 794 9212.

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# Making Decorium A Retail DESTINATION

Retailer institutes programs to create a destination shopping experience.

*Furniture Trends by Janet Holt-Johnstone*

To declare that Decorium's philosophy is unique and far-reaching might be an understatement. Third generation Steve Forberg, now CEO, is convinced that, "Knowledge is key, and we can always learn something from someone else at any age and at any point in life". It was in 1999 Steve attended a meeting that opened his consciousness to a well spring of information with an esteemed U.S. based performance and friendship group. It was his introduction to the concept of open intellectual exchange amongst his industry peers.

The only Canadian retailer in this exclusive furniture sector gathering, Steve asserts, "We all have the same issues, the same likes and dislikes. It's so beneficial. We share information on everything, advertising, marketing, product lines, even our financials."

"The first half day we walk through the host city's store and critique it, then provide feed back. It's so worthwhile!" An

annual event, Steve "spends three dinners, and two full days in the boardroom, all this time brainstorming non-stop with other furniture CEOs."

"There is another group devoted to the needs of sales managers, and an operations group that talks about warehousing and so forth. It's well worth the investment in time and in money."

Both retailers and manufacturers are involved, small and large.

"The group was planning to come to Toronto on September 12, 2001. Obviously, it was necessary to postpone the meeting until October. Once here, they enjoyed their Canadian experience. We certainly learned from it, and we changed some things as a result of this visit. You can become complacent. You must be ready to change."

Forty years ago, Steve's grandfather came to Canada from Poland and made his start in the manufacturing business, Starchrome Furniture, "the largest metal

furniture company in the country in the '40s, '50s and 60s".

In 1976, his father, Joe, was selling in a retail furniture store when he decided to establish Furniture Plaza, his own business. His younger brother, Bill, joined him in the enterprise.

In the early '80s, they changed the name to Grand Design, and soon there were seven stores, "all over the GTA, the city of Toronto, Mississauga, Markham, two in North York, and west to London and Kitchener". Decorium's current location was the distribution centre at Supertest Road off Dufferin Street in near-north Toronto.

Later in the decade, North America was visited by a memorable recession, and the GST (goods and services tax) was imposed. The resilient Forberg's "closed all our stores and liquidated the distribution centre. We had a small little store below our centre for the design trade, our product lines imported from

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Ethan Kap & Brett Kitchen

Darvin Yoder, A dealer from a small town in Washington, Indiana who did 1.75 million in sales last year in a 6000 sq foot store has this to say...

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--Yoder's Furniture, Indiana

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Subject: Re: 4 page letter

Sat, Sun & Mon we wrote in excess of \$100,000. I suppose that's all relative for stores; for some that might be a lot; for others disappointing. **For Us, It's Phenomenal!**

We were very pleased -- daily averages would run \$16,000 to \$20,000. We're consistently hitting over \$25,000. On Tues and Wed we pulled in over \$50,000. **The staying power of the promo is surprising....**

**As you know, we've been in business for over 60 years.** And after 10 down months in a row, I was amazed to see that **We Had the Best December in the History of our company... Now that is saying something.**

Giff

Giff Gates is a past president of the **Western Home Furnishings Association**, and NHFA National Retailer of the year. He is currently on the WHFA Board.

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# DECORIUM

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Europe, Italy in particular. A boutique, really, and we called it Decorium, a combination of Décor and Emporium! We moved Decorium upstairs in '93-'94, and opened it to the public. At first

it was 5,000 square feet, then, as business improved, 10,000 to 15,000 to 20,000 and, finally, our last big expansion to 100,000 square feet, the whole distribution centre.

"I came into the business in 1996, just as things started to change. I had spent a couple of years as marketing director for Sports Authority, before pursuing our family business.

"Since 2007, the three of us, my father, my brother Howard, and me, have run Decorium. We're big enough to bring the consumer great value and to move a lot of product, and small enough to grow! We offer a lot of style at every day prices, a little better store and a little better fashion. We're a one store operation and we are very hands on, shipping all over the world."

## "DECORIUM IS A DESTINATION.

*We don't have many browsers because of our location. People come to us because we give them what they really want."*

In the last few years, the forward-thinking Forbergs have structured an innovative corporate division, recognizing and applauding the enormous surge in Toronto condominium development. "We've created a furniture package with the Shane Baghai condo people, and recently furnished 200 units completely down to lamps and accessories,

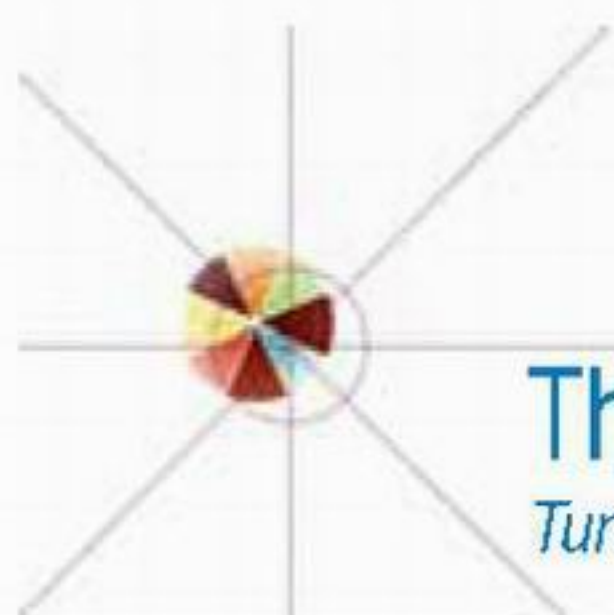


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**Jimmy Goree**  
President & CEO, Goree's Furniture Express

*"The reports and information that we have been able to utilize from Furniture Wizard is incredible! Our staff has taken to this new program so easily. Kudos to the Furniture Wizard team for making a product that gives a furniture retailer like us all the tools and reports that we need to run our business smoothly!"*

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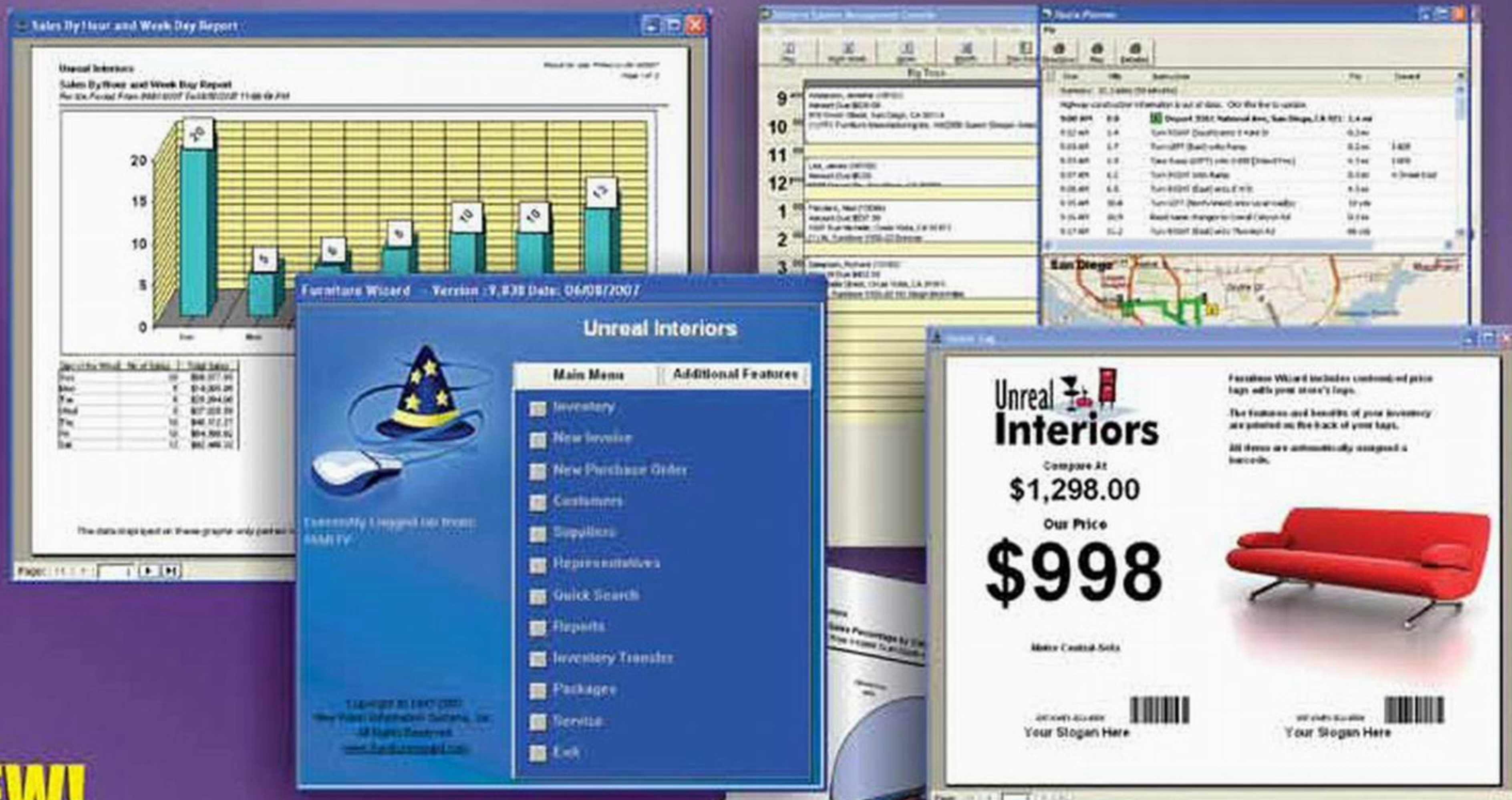
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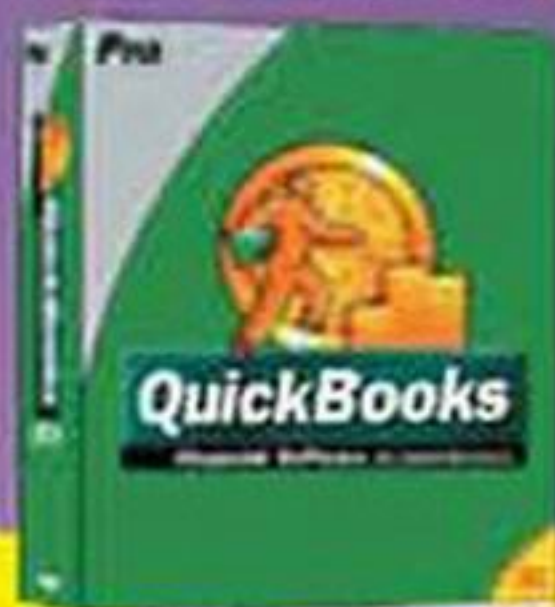


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# DECORIUM

absolutely turn key. The buyers are mostly investors from Hong Kong and Dubai and they are renting them out furnished. In the case of local purchasers, when someone buys a condo, they receive from the builder a Decorium discount card, excellent exposure for us, of course.

"Toronto's Princess Margaret Hospital runs a huge, fund-raising lottery every year, giving away large Tridel and Greenpark homes and condos. We furnish the model homes for them.

"Debbie Fernandez is the manager of the corporate division, and she devotes herself completely to this fascinating new challenge. She is a super talent."

And there are today's small space issues, down-sizers, first home couples, singles, and so to assist their visualization processes the perceptive Forbergs have devised a special model area within the store to show consumers graphically how they can get the most lifestyle elbow room from their available square footage. And with complementary in-store designer advice. "Twenty-five per-

cent of our staffers are designers and they are in the upper one-third of performers. With good staff we have less turnover, and we develop our staff from within.

"We have our own design centre within Decorium and this helps to get the consumer engaged in colour coordinating. The Internet room planner is a great feature, too, both on the spot and on the web. Consumers can measure their spaces at home and spend time on their computers moving furniture about, then e-mail the result to our designers to pre-pick possible pieces, or bring the plans in with them when they visit.

"Decorium is a destination store; we don't have many browsers because of our location. People come to us because we give them what they really want. Today's consumer is different and we must all flex to change. They are a lot more educated and confident, and before they come to us they know (in many cases from the our website, from shelter magazines and television design programmes) what they are looking for, the style, the trends, where the product is

made, the construction components of the pieces and they have a pretty good idea of pricing. They are much farther ahead in the buying process, stage four, not stage one. You have to adapt to each individual consumer. A degree in psychology would help!

"We collect information from the consumer both from our website and from a kiosk at the front door. They are asked to register with us, to provide their name, e-mail address, and so forth, thus helping us to build our database. Once they are registered with us we offer them a broad spectrum of opportunities, including our very popular \$1,000 shopping spree." No purchase is necessary, consumers can enter in store or online.

"Every month I broadcast an e-mail newsletter which incorporates four-day promotional incentives, news about trends, what's happening in décor, an e-blast! The special incentives are not offered to the public at large." Decorium currently lists 10,000 on-line consumers. "We do a lot online with banner advertising and word scan, Google search words."



**THE PERCEPTIVE FORBERGS HAVE DEVISED**  
*a special model area within the store to show consumers graphically how they can get the most lifestyle elbow room from their available square footage.*





*"We bought Genesis in 2003  
and absolutely love it.  
Now our salespeople spend  
more time on the floor and  
less time doing paperwork.  
I couldn't be happier and  
would not hesitate to  
choose Genesis  
all over again."*

*- John Dunn  
Dunn's Furniture*

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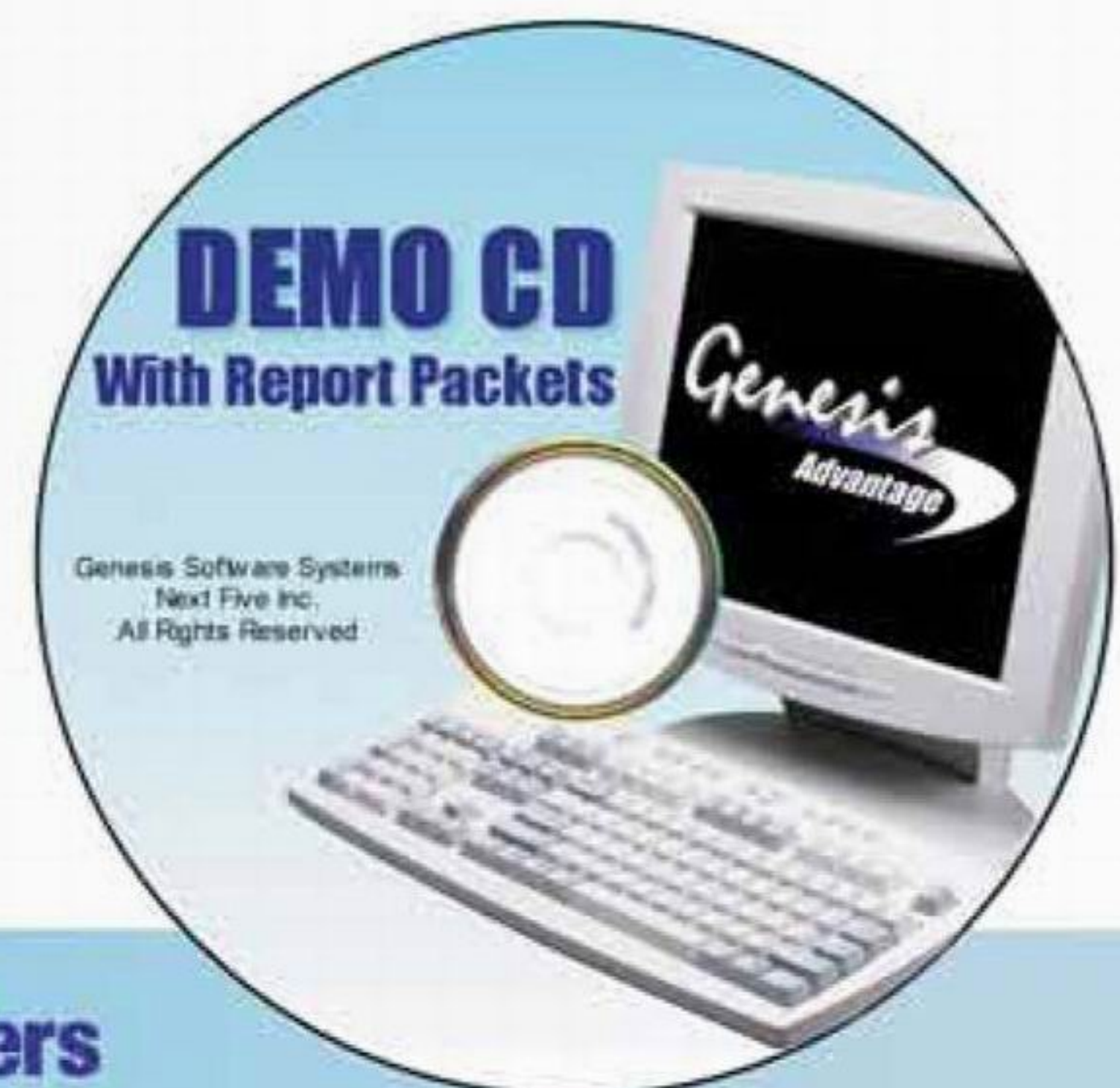
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## "WE'VE CREATED A PACKAGE

*with the Shane Baghai  
condo people, and  
recently furnished 200  
units completely down  
to lamps and accessories,  
absolutely turn key."*

Steve, with a degree in Business Administration and a huge imagination, "does all the buying, all the advertising and oversees the operations end of things. Howard is in charge of sales for Decorium.

"Dad comes into the store three or four days a week when he's at home and his input is invaluable. He spends winters now in Florida playing golf."

About nine months ago, the Forbergs developed a new section within Decorium called "Surroundings", an exciting 10,000 square foot gallery.

"Very functional furniture, completely contemporary." An outstanding, colourful insert was placed, in broad distribution, in Canada's national newspaper, "The Globe & Mail". The insert announced a four-day event, "Save up to 50% OFF storewide". A very successful promotion. And a point of interest for visiting consumers.

For additional exposure, he has used Condo Life Magazine and Toronto Life. "And the teachers' magazine. We run a special promotion for the teachers of Ontario to thank them for their efforts in

shaping the minds of the future, giving back something to these special people."

Just recently, Decorium added Universal Furniture/Better Homes and Gardens furniture line, the newly unveiled fourth collection, "traditional styling with transitional flair", to their floor and their website's promotional incentives at 20% off. Steve is high on Better Homes and Gardens' huge readership of 40 million women, "the second best selling book in the world, second only to the Bible! The collections reflect

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Traditional Area



BHG Bedroom Collection



what women want based on feedback from field editors that scout the country in search of their input." Steve cited one accent piece, a night table that eliminates those untidy cords; one can plug in lamps, clock radios, whatever, right into the table.

Other suppliers are Bernhardt, Stanley, Magnussen, Pulaski, Broyhill, Décor-Rest, Lexington, Romano, Renwil, Brentwood and Palliser, among others.

"We are a very service oriented company, both pre and post sale. If a customer decides they really don't like a fabric, for instance, we will work with them, find them a fabric they do like, and send the piece out to our upholsterer. Customization. They made the decision to come to you for their needs; we believe in giving the customer what they really want.

"Our best customers are those that have had service. We take care of anything, major or minor, large or small. We handle problems after the manufacturers' warranties have expired. Business is about relationships and customer service.

"There are more channels for the consumer to purchase furniture than ever before. The big box stores, the super centres, even grocery stores, and consumers can be confused. We have to be first, and we have to be different, our merchandise, our service and display. So many retailers now are price driven, and we made the decision not to play in that game but instead operate in the upper middle market with style, value, selection and service."

Steve is convinced that, "The industry must share information, not necessarily in their own trading area, but in general; we could all learn so much more." Precisely the concept of the founders of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine, more than a century ago.

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# "I'll Know It When... I SEE IT

How should you respond to customers  
who say that they don't want sales assistance?

*Sales Skills By Dr. Peter A. Marino*

While there are instances in which the words "I'll know it when I see it" are based on logic, there are other instances in which logic is totally lacking in this so-called common sense dictum.

Take the example of an instance in which the dictum is logical. Let's say you lost your glasses while working in your garden. You can say with absolute logic you'll know your glasses when you see them (if you can see them without your glasses).

Let's apply this dictum to a customer shopping for a sofa who, up front, has just told her salesperson, "I'll know it when I see it." The customer may have been searching the internet and found something that looks appropriate. And if the customer's most important need is based on something visible like color, style, or size, she may have a valid point. For that reason, you might reply by saying something like the following: "Since you seem to be looking for something in a sofa having to do with how it looks, would you mind if I asked you a few questions about what you're hoping to see in the sofa you are looking for?" Having gained the customer's permission, you can proceed to inquire about such things as the color, style, and size the customer might have in mind.

More often than not, however, what the customer is looking for is not based

on color, style, or size. Instead, it is based on comfort or durability or both, qualities that do not reveal themselves to a merely external visual examination. In other words, some features customers are looking for have to do with the valence factors – a term that address the very personalized or relevant benefits that a customer requires. Experienced salespeople are fully aware that the valence factors customers consciously seek in a mattress, for example, vary considerably from those they seek in upholstered goods. Meanwhile the valence factors customers seek in case goods vary considerably from those they seek either in a mattress or in an upholstered item. But the main reason salespeople should not handle the "I'll know it when I see it" with resigned reticence is that to do so is to betray their role as consultants. There is more to furniture than meets the eye. And while it is true the average customer shopping for furniture is not looking for a salesperson to tell them how to build a given piece of furniture, the following saying popularized among yesteryear's salespeople is apropos: "You can never know too much about your product, but you can talk too much about it." It is the first part of that compound sentence that too many salespeople disregard.

Nor is the glib expression that furniture is not rocket science the final verdict on whether salespeople should have a spe-

cialized knowledge of their product. The techniques required to make the coils in our premium mattresses required a lot of serious research. The stress tests the best chairs are subjected to are impressive indeed. And the sheer knowledge of chemistry imbedded in the dyes that color the more precious fabrics on upholstered goods is highly sophisticated.

Because furniture is complicated, customers require knowledgeable salespeople who truly are consultants. As consultants, salespeople must uncover the hidden needs of their customers. That calls for subtle probing skills. The best salespeople in every industry are wizards at probing for customer needs: what the customer is specifically looking for, the customer's complete needs, and the priority of those needs. These wizards don't interrogate; instead, like whales, they sound out a customer's needs. Interestingly, the French word for probing is *sonder*, to sound out.

A blogger on the [creative-brand.com](http://creative-brand.com) website noted his concern with the glib saying, "I'll know it when I see it." Although that site focuses on another industry, his comments are apropos for ours as well. He states that, "I'll know it when I see it" means that you have no clear idea of what you're trying to accomplish with your work – no criteria for your decisions. Therefore, you have



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*For all salespeople there will remain these requirements: product knowledge, selling skills, and attitude.*

no criteria to evaluate them against... Instead, here's what happens: you end up evaluating your options by simply looking for something that happens to strike a chord and look nice to you. Doing this reduces your evaluation of ideas from strategic to aesthetic. Instead of looking for the right strategic solution, you end up looking for what's pretty."

If your store is designed and merchandised in a way that spurs a positive emotional response in customers, then a different approach may be called for. If a

high percentage of them "see it" in your store and "know it," and if customers who are just looking, can get help quickly when they need it, then the skillful and early sounding out of customer needs may not be appropriate. If not, then the next time one of your customers tells you, "I'll know it when I see it," be a wizard, a Sherlock Holmes. Try to get to the bottom of what that customer is telling you without annoying them. Your response calls for more than rocket science, since many customers simply don't know

enough about furniture features and how these features will meet their needs, to know it when they see it. They won't know simply by looking at a recliner that it has a built-in mechanism for assuring the recliner will hold a given comfortable position for years to come. They won't know that a mattress is not to be judged by the number of its coils alone, or that a proper comfort test is necessary to pick the right set. They won't know that, depending on a customer's personalized needs, a fabric that is a blend may be superior to a fabric consisting of, say, Olefin alone or of Nylon alone. In other words, the average customer requires a consultant's eyes, backed up by specialized product knowledge.

For all salespeople there will remain these three requirements: product knowledge, selling skills, and attitude. How well you can provide your customers with the consultation they require will always depend on how well you can recommend the best product, once you have uncovered the customer's personalized needs. Only with your help does the customer have a real chance of knowing it when he or she sees it.

Trainer, educator and group leader Dr. Peter A. Marino writes extensively on sales training techniques and their furniture retailing applications. He has deep experience as a top salesman, sales manager, corporate trainer and consultant. Dr. Marino has undergraduate degrees in English and philosophy and a Ph. D. in ancient Greek and Latin. His books include "The Golden Rules of Selling Bedding", "Stop Losing Those Bedding Sales" and "It's Buying, Silly!" available through FURNITURE WORLD. Questions can be sent to Peter Marino at [pmarino@furninfo.com](mailto:pmarino@furninfo.com). You can read all of Dr. Marino's articles on [furninfo.com](http://furninfo.com) in the Sales Skill article archives.



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# Design



## Dutailier

*This modern looking glider offers adjustable headrest, back and lumbar cushions for perfect back support. Available with three different bases, 25 leathers and 22 microfibers. Contact information on index page 62.*

## New Creative

*Scrolled Coat Rack is from the Square Nest Collection offering vintage inspired home accessories with a modern twist. Products include accessories, frames, baskets, candles, lighting, clocks, furniture and porch furniture. Contact information on index page 62.*

## Mi-di

*Division of BDM + Furniture Introduces the Urban Collection in solid birch. Tables are available in different sizes with a choice of table legs. Also available is a vast selection of chairs, buffets, hutches and curios. Contact information on index page 62.*





## Brownstone

The Sienna Dining Collection with its unusual extension table expands from 56" to 72" with the use of easy to attach curved leaves. Contact information on index page 62.



## Classic Flame

The Pasadena Home Theater is an electric fireplace with ample storage for audio and video components. Constructed from high quality solid hardwoods and wood veneers. It is Transitional in style with a brown Espresso finish. Contact information on index page 62.



## A.A. Laun

Side table from the Harbour Town Collection is crafted of solid maple and is part of A.A. Laun's Custom Colors Program featuring four primary wood stains and a wide selection of painted finishes. Contact information on index page 62.



## Dinec

The Wind Collection has a subtle majestic style. Made of solid birch, this contemporary styled bedroom furniture is available in Queen, King and California King sizes. Contact information on index page 62.





# Design



## Klaussner

The Foundations Collection has metal bracket corners, recessed campaign style accents, and an antique brass finish. The collection boasts fashion-forward trestle style bases, and features a deep cherry finish. Contact information on index page 62.

## Harden

Sliding Door Curio has a unique sliding door design with lights and glass shelves, rope turned legs and a stretcher base. This casually elegant design is available with seeded glass doors or with a wire mesh option. Made of solid cherry with Antique Pearl finish. Contact information on index page 62.



## Bermex

This transitional dining group is made of North American birch and is available in 86 finishes which can be combined. The 54" glass top table is available with 6 different leg choices (with wooden apron) as well as 4 bases (no apron). Contact information page 62.





## Groovystuff

The Legacy Live Collection combines made in America wrought iron frames with reclaimed wagon parts. Rustic elegance for both indoor and outdoor use, this collection provides consumers with a sustainable choice in home furnishings. Contact information on index page 62.

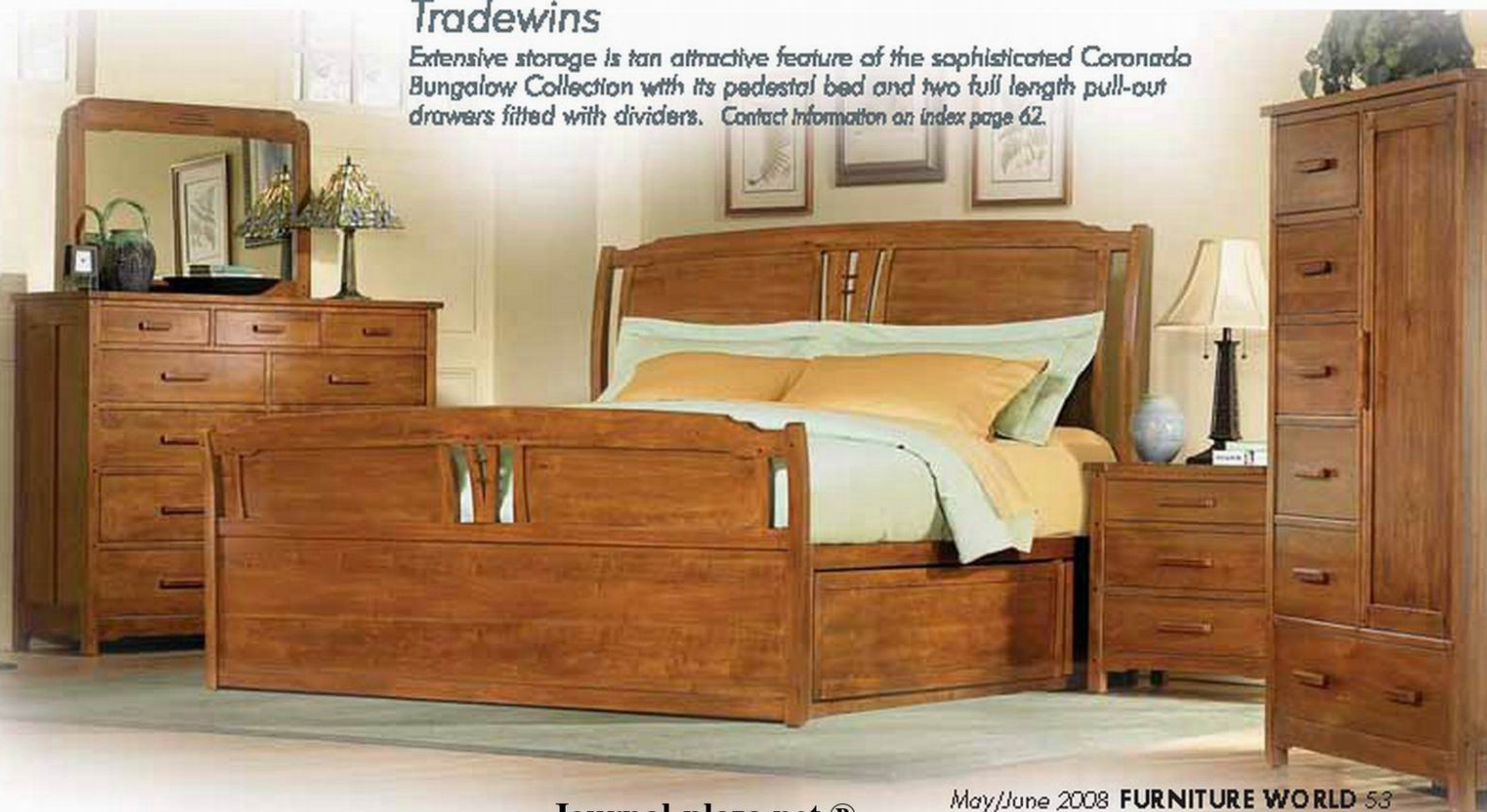


## Artisan House

This multi-colored, multi-layered wall sculpture is named "Kaleidoscope." The piece's tinted steel, brass, copper and bronze elements combine bold colors with intriguing triangular and circular shapes. "Kaleidoscope" measures 52" x 4" x 33"; retail price, \$513. Contact information on index page 62.

## Tradewins

Extensive storage is an attractive feature of the sophisticated Coronado Bungalow Collection with its pedestal bed and two full length pull-out drawers fitted with dividers. Contact information on index page 62.





# Design



## Flexsteel

"Mountain", a 49" tall recliner, with a 22" seat height and width, is coupled with the industry's strongest and most durable seating system. This mountain recliner is now fitted with Flexsteel's strongest lift, a mechanism to meet the needs of today's larger customer. Contact information on index page 62.



## Magnussen

The versatile Dartmouth Collection is a casual dining assortment that redefines retro styling with clean lines and a medium caramel finish over ash veneers and solids. Contact information on index page 62.



## Philips Collection

New from Yuri Zatarain, exclusively for The Phillips Collection. Large-scale wall tiles in his signature aged earth tones. The birds are also new for 2008. Contact information page 62.





## Easels by Amron

One of over 250 pieces now available, this easel is 58" tall, is made of wood and comes in a cherry finish. Contact information on index page 62.



## Darafeev

The luxurious Nomad Barstool, shown in the new Espresso finish, is made from American Maple. Also available in counter height or as a game chair. Choose from a multitude of fabric and finish combinations to fit into any décor. Made in USA. Contact information on index page 62.



## Keystone

Legacy Black dining room is part of the Keystone Classics line of primitive fine furniture. Available in oak and cherry as well as white pine with a wide selection of stain, design and finishing options. Contact information on index page 62.





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